

SCHOOLS OF AMBITION: A PROGRAMME FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

Which schools can qualify?

The key to joining the programme is the ambition and commitment of the school and the quality of its ideas for transformation. Schools of Ambition will want to take on new challenges and generate an ethos of ambition, a 'can do' attitude and a buzz and excitement in the life of the school. They will want to drive innovation and change in Scottish education for the good of all. A specific assessment of the leadership capacity of the school is an element of the bidding process.

The main focus of the programme is secondary schools, which can apply individually or as a cluster with associated primary and special schools. These include a mix of schools: schools most in need of transformation - very often those contending with the most challenging local circumstances in Scotland - and schools that have strong ideas for transformation and can set new standards of excellence.

How are the schools selected?

Schools wishing to participate in the programme should submit, through their local authority, a brief statement of how the school would benefit from access to the programme. This should cover the :

- vision for transformational change
- impact on the school community
- actions to drive transformation.

Submissions will be followed up by visits to each school to discuss plans in more details with staff, pupils and Directors of Education.

The Advisory Group consider bids made by schools and the supplementary evidence gathered during the visits and make recommendations to Ministers who take the final decisions on which schools should be invited to join the programme.

What sort of ideas are supported?

The best ideas will be generated by schools, who know their own circumstances and know what they could do with extra support to make a real difference. Each school is different and will have a unique path to transformation and improvement. Examples might include:

- leadership development for staff and pupils
- investment in school infrastructure to improve the environment for learning and to support new ways of learning and teaching or new curricular opportunities
- enhancement of curricular areas like music, drama, sport, language or enterprise
- strengthening aspects of the life of the school that develop pupil engagement, such as community involvement, action on sustainability and link programmes with schools in other parts of the world
- development and strengthening pupil support programmes through new ways of working and through provision of extra opportunities for pupils such as out of school residential opportunities
- actions to strengthen parental involvement and support for learning
- programmes to build health improvement for pupils and the wider community

Help will be given to schools by the Executive and local authority to develop initial ideas into truly ambitious plans.

Head teachers can use new flexibilities, for example in the curriculum, to move ahead with their transformational plans under the full scope of devolved school management. Each school will emphasise leadership and responsibility by all in the school - staff and pupils - as a key to success. Head teachers are expected to engage staff fully in the development and implementation of its programme.

Who else is supporting schools of ambition?

Schools of ambition will engage their local communities - parents, voluntary organisations, other professions, local sporting figures, artists and performers, and local businesses.

Selected schools will be offered support to develop the bids into a fuller transformation plan. This support is tailored to schools' needs and it likely to cover areas such as:

- good practice, leading edge thinking, critical success factors and delivering transformation in a school environment
- the involvement of all stakeholders
- programme and project management and bringing about transformational change
- planning, finance and resource management
- communication and people skills

The Scottish Executive is seeking the engagement of business partners who might bring their success, drive and potentially financial contribution, to add value and extra dimensions to schools. They will be invited to help the school achieve more, bring drive, support, encouragement, advice, constructive challenge and mentoring. They can expect to be closely engaged with the work of the school, its programme of transformation, and in celebrating the school's success.

Are the schools 'specialist schools'?

The schools are non-selective and serve their local communities. They are expected to build a particular expertise in at least one area of the curriculum.

How much funding does each school get and for how long?

The Scottish Executive will act as a guarantor of at least an additional £100,000 per year for an agreed period. Business partners of the school may offer additional support that will allow the school to add value and extra options to transform the life of the school.

How many schools will qualify?

The Executive anticipates a rolling programme, allowing further opportunities for schools to come onto the programme at different points. We envisage having a maximum of 40 schools involved in the programme at any given time.